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# HATE CRIME REPORTING: OBSTACLES, FACILITATORS, AND STRATEGIES EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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**HATE CRIME REPORTING:  
OBSTACLES, FACILITATORS, AND STRATEGIES  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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# HATE CRIME REPORTING

## HATE CRIME REPORTING: OBSTACLES, FACILITATORS, AND STRATEGIES

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This summary provides an overview of a project to collect information on hate crime in Massachusetts and examine methodological issues in its collection. It discusses issues raised by these findings for which further consideration is necessary.

#### News Reports

Media and news coverage of bias motivated crime was able to describe in detail and specify the type of bias crimes and incidents that were being committed across the Commonwealth. Media coverage also proved to be an effective tool because the papers, such as The Boston Globe and The Boston Herald, were able to sensitize the public to the issues of discrimination while presenting to the reader the elements of prejudice and hatred. There were, however, problems in the variability of the quality of the reports presented in the media.

#### Advocacy Reports

Advocacy reports from many organizations, such as the Anti-Defamation League, were also able to provide sizable amounts of information as to what types of crimes and bias incidents were being committed in the Commonwealth. The advocacy organization data were also able to provide the SAC with substantial numbers

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of reports for comparison with other agencies.

Reports provided by community agencies that had standard procedures for receiving reports closely paralleled law enforcement reports. Those for agencies not having had training or a procedure for reporting tended to have more incomplete reports.

### Police Reports

In the greater Boston area, physical assaults and verbal harassment seemed more common-place, whereas vandalism and destruction of property, personal and private, seemed to occur in areas farther away from Boston. In most towns reporting there was a similarity between the law enforcement and advocacy group reports. Some communities, however, had no police reports of hate crimes or bias incidents, even though community groups reported providing such to the local police. There were also some communities in which police reported hate crimes that were not identified by advocacy organizations.

Training for police departments increased the quality and extent of the reports. Training for advocacy organizations in the community tended to improve the quality of police reports. It also tended to foster cooperation with community organizations in responding to hate crimes.

### Reporting Problems

Problems with reporting range from reluctance to cultural disregard and procedural lapses. These problems created percep-



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tion issues with the law enforcement authorities. Public perception of the police diminished when a rash of brutality cases against law enforcement authorities received public attention. This, in turn, brought about anger in the communities where bias motivation had existed. It was assumed by some that the authorities thought these cases to be low priority, even though that was not always the case.

Many of the advocacy agencies became scapegoats for the reporting problem. They themselves either didn't respond to inquiries about bias data or had not recorded nor reported information for a variety of reasons. Strategies that remedy and facilitate reporting by community organizations enhance data collection. Participation in policy-making decisions concerning hate crime legislation and establishing bias motivated crimes and incidents as a high profile issue are two factors advocacy agencies can affect that will help data collection.

Creating guidelines and model policies that assist in the training of police officers in regards to bias motivation will help in the improvement of the reporting system. Improving the reporting system requires law enforcement authorities, from upper level senior officers down to the patrolman, to be trained with a focus on two goals. One goal should be to provide an effective professional response to hate crime. Officers must treat hate crime like any other serious crime. The other goal is to understand the attitudes of the victim and the victimized communities. Police officers must be more culturally sensitive towards indi-

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viduals of color or differing ethnic or national backgrounds. Officers who harbor bigoted views will not be able to provide an effective, professional response to bias motivated crime.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations focus on three areas: policing, training, and community planning. Each area addresses major issues identified by the study.

#### Policing

- O All police departments should have designated and trained Civil Right's Officers or Units.
- O Officers should immediately report bias related crimes and incidents to their respective Civil right's Officers.
- O Professional law enforcement associations should make in-depth discussion of identification and response to hate crimes and incidents a priority in their programming and accept responsibility for providing leadership in combating hate crime.

#### Training

- O A curriculum on hate crimes needs to be disseminated for Police Training.
- O Victim perspectives should be provided in law enforcement training.
- O The curriculum should include defining and identifying hate crimes, understanding the proper responses for hate crime victims, and learning the procedure for investigating and reporting hate crimes,
- O Criminal Justice Personnel should be trained in understanding cultural differences and comprehending the impact of hate crime on individual and the community.
- O Judges and clerk magistrates should be trained in hate crime identification.

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### Community Planing

- O There should be established a human rights commission or office in every municipality.
- O The area human rights commissions should develop a mutually supportive relationship with the designated Civil Rights Officers in the local police.
- O Human rights commissions should be able to receive summary information on civil rights violations handled by the police departments and/or district Attorneys in their respective towns and provide referrals thereto.
- O Police departments, community organizations, and advocacy groups must work together toward the elimination of hate crime.
- O Media should adopt and implement policies that contribute to public understanding of the nature and potency of hate crimes.







